

***Platanthera obtusata* (Banks ex. Pursh) Lindl.**

small northern bog-orchid  
Orchidaceae (Orchid Family)

**Status:** State Sensitive

**Rank:** G5S2

**General Description:** Adapted from Hitchcock et al. (1969): Glabrous perennial, 3 to 8 inches tall, often with fleshy or tuberous roots, scape, with a single (rarely 2) basal leaf (in addition to 1 or 2 sheathing bracts), the blade elliptic-oblongate to oblong-oblongate,  $1\frac{1}{4}$  to 4 inches long and  $\frac{1}{3}$  to  $\frac{1}{4}$  as broad, rounded or obtuse, gradually tapered to a winged petiole  $\frac{1}{4}$  to fully as long. Scape leafless or occasionally with a single, small, long-sheathing bract near midlength. Raceme rather loosely 3 to 15 flowered, the pedicels  $<\frac{1}{16}$  to  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch long, the floral bracts from green and up to  $\frac{2}{3}$  inch long below to yellowish and scarcely  $\frac{1}{16}$  inch long above. Perianth pale greenish or yellowish-green, the lip and sometimes the petals whitish. Upper sepal triangular-reniform to suborbicular,  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch long, nearly erect. Lower sepals obliquely triangular-ovate, about  $\frac{1}{8}$  to  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch long, somewhat reflexed. Petals slightly shorter to longer than the upper sepal and converging with it, somewhat broadly lanceolate-falcate, outlining the entrance to the orifice. Lip narrowly ligulate, scarcely  $\frac{1}{16}$  inch broad,  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{3}$  inch long, pendent but with a slightly upturned tip, generally convex, with 2 small oblong calluses near the base leading to the semi-circular orifice. Spur tapered from the base, slightly curved, usually  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{3}$  inch long. Column with triangular-lanceolate lateral processes projecting upward,  $\frac{1}{16}$  to  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch long, the connective  $<\frac{1}{16}$  inch wide. Pollinia 1 per anther sac, the pollen rather loosely aggregated, the viscidium discoid.

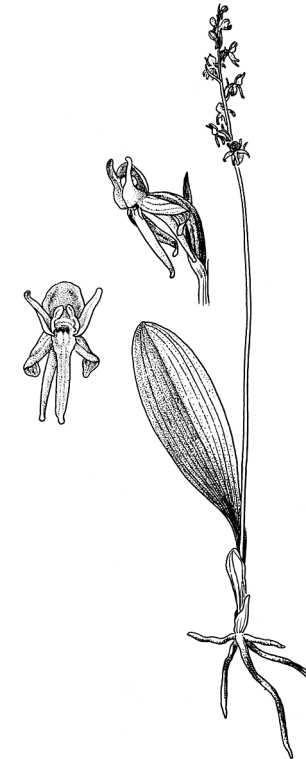
**Identification Tips:** *Platanthera obtusata*'s most distinguishing character is the presence of only one, semi-erect, glabrous leaf with a tapering tip located at the base of the plant. The taxon is most easily confused with seedlings of other orchids and lilies. Most of these seedlings do not have the obtuse leaf shape that is characteristic of *P. obtusata*.

**Phenology:** Flowers June through July.

**Range:** Circumpolar; Alaska through British Columbia to Newfoundland, south to Oregon, Utah, Montana, Colorado, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and New York. The species is found in Ferry, Okanogan, and Whatcom counties in the Okanogan Highlands and Western Cascades physiographic provinces.

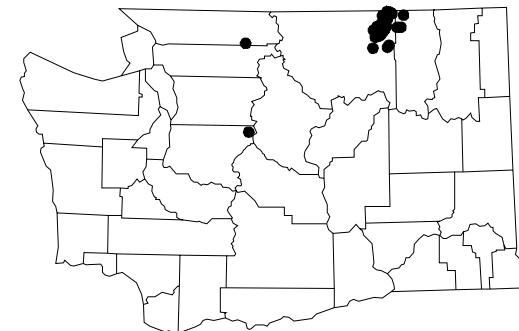
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Known distribution of  
*Platanthera obtusata*  
in Washington



● Current (1980+)  
○ Historic (older than 1980)

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**Habitat:** In damp or wet places in forests, marshes, bogs, meadows, and along streambanks. Most known occurrences in Washington are in moist to wet forests dominated by *Picea engelmannii* and/or *Thuja plicata*. *Equisetum arvense* and *Gymnocarpium dryopteris* are common understory dominants. Other species commonly present include *Linnaea borealis* and *Cornus canadensis*. Elevations range from 800 to 5000 feet.

**Ecology:** *Platanthera obtusata* is identified as a facultative wetland species (USFWS 1988). Known occurrences of the species have an average overstory canopy of 50 percent. Portions of some sites have, however, had the timber harvested in the past. The effects of canopy removal are not certain, but it would generally result in increased solar radiation, decreased soil moisture, altered hydrology, and potential competition from aggressive shrubs and herbs.

**State Status Comments:** The taxon is peripheral in Washington and is sensitive to a variety of disturbances. In addition, many of the species' occurrences are small, which may put them at risk of being non-viable.

**Inventory Needs:** Appropriate habitats should continue to be inventoried.

**Threats and Management Concerns:** Activities that result in physical disturbance to the habitat, such as grazing, road construction and timber harvest, would certainly have at least localized impacts. In addition, any activities that significantly alter hydrology could be detrimental to the species.

**References:**

Hitchcock, C. L., A. Cronquist, M. Ownbey, and J.W. Thompson. 1969. *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest, Part 1: Vascular Cryptogams, Gymnosperms, and Monocotyledons*. University of Washington Press, Seattle. 914 pp.

Luer, C.A. 1975. *The Native Orchids of the United States and Canada*. New York Botanical Garden, New York.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1988. National list of vascular plant species that occur in wetlands. USFWS Biological Report 88 (24).